

Congressional Testimony at the hearing of

Chen Guangcheng: His Case, Cause, Family, and Those Who are Helping Him

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In September 1993, I was released half a year ahead of the end of my 15-year sentence. On February 27, 1994, I met privately with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck in a restaurant. He asked me if I was willing to meet with Secretary of State Warren Christopher to discuss Chinese human rights affairs during Christopher's visit the following month. We agreed on some of the details of the talks during the meeting with Secretary of State Christopher.

After two to three days, in a morning, police came to my home and said their boss wants to talk to me. They brought me to a resort hotel near the Ming Tombs Reservoir. The visitor with a family name of Guo began the conversation, defining it as a negotiation that needed my help. He said that they knew that I planned to meet with the U.S. Secretary of State Christopher and asked me not to meet Christopher.

I said no. He said we could exchange conditions with you. We know what you want to do, and as long as you do not meet with the U.S. Secretary of State, we can promise you to do what you want.

I said I do not believe things are this simple. He said: you may not know how important Sino-US trade is to us -- put away those false figures, 70 per cent of our annual real profits comes from foreign trade; of which, 70 per cent of that comes from trade with the U.S..

He said that I have thought things too simple. The interests of both China and the United States will determine that even if there were trade sanctions, they would only be short-lived. The enterprises of the two countries will not let them continue to the degree that results in the collapse of the Communist government. Yet, someone in the Chinese government will be held responsible for even short-term sanctions, which means that the highest authorities will have to step down due to these sanctions. This is why some people want to make a fuss on me. He told me that the authorities will agree with several things I want to do, in exchange for my reconsideration.

He put down these conditions on paper, with the top line being “release political prisoners”, along with a list of 35 names. The other three items were also what I wanted to do, namely: to organize trade unions, to establish artists’ own companies, to buy bank shares and to help transfer humanitarian donations.

After he gave me more than one hour time, this official with the family name of Guo came back to talk to me again. He said that he could include one more condition as added proof of good intentions: that is, in addition to releasing political prisoners, on the premise that I do not violate my promise, they will not arrest any of my people, by which he meant all the pro-democracy activists.

I said: You just detained a number of pro-democracy activists recently who are not on your list. What would happen to these people?

He told me to give him one day’s time to release all of them, and I could decide if I will accept their conditions afterward.

The next day, I called a few friends, and learned that those who were detained were indeed released without condition, nor explanation. By then, I felt that the credibility of this official named Guo was already relatively high, so I accepted their terms.

About a month later on March 29, 1994, I was once again arrested. The police who know me well brought me to a restaurant outside and told me that there was an intensive debate within the Communist Party after Secretary of State Christopher left China. The other side did not think that they should abide by the terms of the agreement. From then on, the Chinese government started an 18-month illegal detention against me.

From this process, we could learn several features concerning negotiation with the Chinese Communists government:

- 1) The Chinese Communist government is only restrained by its interest, not its promises. That is because fundamentally, it does not recognize common sense and reason, but only its “great ideal. ”
- 2) The Chinese government is not a whole, but composed of different interest groups. The struggle within them lacks rules, and even national interests often become bargaining chips between them.
- 3) Holding a hostage in its hands while making negotiations is the traditional way of the Communist government. It uses any means for its interests; this is their official theory.